

aiming to vasectomise rural males on a large scale led to the perception of community health workers as merely agents of central government. Options for financing programmes are discussed ranging from the voluntary system in Tanzania, the payments of low level honoraria in Nepal to the option of "fee for service" which has emerged in China. Results and evaluations of the programmes are presented and their individual strengths and weaknesses reviewed.

This book presents a comprehensive overview of the subject of the community health worker, discussing both the theoretical and practical issues in detail. It would be useful to anyone involved in the planning of such programmes or with a particular interest in the subject.

CHRISTINE J EVANS

*Clinical Research Fellow,
Department of Public Health Sciences,
University of Edinburgh.*

Evaluating Social Work Effectiveness. By J Cheetham, R Fuller, G McIvor, A Petch. (Pp 170; £37.50 (hb), £12.99 (pb).) Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992. ISBN 0335-19005-7.

Recently, I have been involved in teaching postgraduates in community medicine and health education about the personal social services. Each year questions are asked about the effectiveness of social work services, which so often seem the subject of public criticism. Until now the picture drawn has been unclear because social work research has developed unevenly across different specialisms with research into child care historically representing one of the most advanced. This book, however, will make a positive difference when attempting to answer what is known about the rights and wrongs of social work practice across the breadth of its aspirations.

Based on the pioneering work of the Social Work Research Centre, which was established at Stirling University in 1986 to study the effectiveness of social work services, the book seeks to encourage informed comment on social work through the knowledge gained by doing research. This purpose is tackled in two ways. First, there is a review of different research approaches as they apply to evaluations and effectiveness which have proved sympathetic to the realities of day to day social work and which take account of the heterogeneous clientele and the varied care and help provided to them. Second, these different methods are illustrated through a review of studies which shed light on the effectiveness of services. These studies include the current programme of research in the centre ranging from an evaluation of services to promote the rehabilitation and community care of people with mental health problems to residential services for elderly people and earlier influential research in social work, and notable projects in other disciplines, mainly medicine and economics.

There are no simple conclusions. Yet beneficiaries of social work seem favourable in their evaluations of social work services. Perhaps more importantly anyone reading this book will come to understand how social work is approaching the difficult and universal problems posed by evaluating effectiveness.

LORRAINE WATERHOUSE

*Senior Lecturer,
Edinburgh Centre for
Social Welfare and Research,
University of Edinburgh*

Atlas of Aids. By Mathew Smallman-Raynor, Andrew Cliff, and Peter Hagggett. (Pp430, £100.00) Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. ISBN 063117810

The aim of this atlas is to map the first decade of the newly recognised AIDS pandemic. This is an overwhelming task for a disease which accumulates new research publications faster than any other and in only 10 years has added 31 000 publications to the scientific literature.

The atlas is divided into four sections; the first deals with the nature of AIDS and includes clinical, immunological, and virological information as well as a chapter on the sources of AIDS data. This highlights the difficulties with data interpretation given the differing surveillance techniques used to collate the data and the various diagnostic criteria for AIDS used throughout the world.

The second section deals with the origins and dispersal of the epidemic and maps HIV infection prior to 1981. It examines the various theories of the global spread of AIDS. The third section explores the geography of the epidemic in different areas of the world according to the pattern of virus spread, and documents how this pattern has already changed in some countries and is likely to change in others. The final section looks to the future and discusses the various modelling techniques used for predicting the course of the epidemic and its probable economic implications.

As a clinical epidemiologist with no experience of geography, I found the text difficult to follow, particularly in the more geographical chapters, even allowing for the fact that the more technical detail was left to the technical appendix at the end of each session. I never really got to grips with the concepts of geographical diffusion, changing spatial patterns, and epidemic velocity. The excellent graphical representation of much of the subject matter made it possible to follow the gist.

I found the layout of the book irritating (landscape A4, bound along the top edge) and could see no good reason for it. It made the book very cumbersome and irritating to read and has been the source of much unfavourable comment among colleagues.

For those with some geographical background this is an interesting historical document but as the authors state at the outset, for current reference purposes it will be quickly out of date.

FM COWAN

*Clinical Lecturer,
University College London Medical School*

Health Care in Nicaragua: Primary Care Under Changing Regimes. By Richard Garfield and Glen Williams (Pp296; £35.00) New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. ISBN 0-19-506753-3.

This updated edition, co-written by an epidemiologist and a health educator, sets out to analyse critically the Nicaraguan health system under the Somoza dictatorship, the Sandinistas, and the post-Sandinista Chamorro government.

It begins and ends with two natural disasters and compares the reaction of the incumbent government to each. The first was the earthquake that affected Managua in 1972, in which 10 000 people died, 20 000 were injured, and 300 000 left homeless.

The over-riding official response was one of panic, and the most visible aid was barbed wire from the United States, used to discourage looters. The President is reported to have made millions speculating on land and pocketing aid. The second disaster was the hurricane that hit the Atlantic coast in 1988. This produced a similar level of destruction but a rather different reaction. The government worked with local communities to evacuate people to safe areas around the country. There was a rapid programme of rebuilding and extensive health precautions were taken. There was little hopelessness, no barbed wire, and no speculation. The years between these two events saw many changes in Nicaragua and those relating to health are examined in this book.

The first chapter describes the situation before 1979 and the chaos inherited by the Sandinistas. The months of fighting had led to a virtual collapse of health services, particularly in rural areas. Following the revolution, nurses who travelled outside the cities to vaccinate children found people who asked: "What is a nurse? What is vaccination?" The book contains many such personal experiences and these serve to further highlight the wealth of data also provided.

The next five chapters describe the evolution of health services during the 1980s. Issues covered include community participation, the importance of the National Literacy Crusade, the recruitment and role of health volunteers (*brigadistas*), the mass mobilisation campaigns against diseases preventable by immunisation, and, finally, the effects of the Contra war.

Chapters 7-12 cover particular topics in more detail: women's health, including contraception, abortion, sex education, and AIDS. The authors describe how, following the 1990 election, Catholic church doctrine gained increasing influence. The schools no longer covered sexually transmitted diseases, condom posters were removed, and the Health Minister's slogan "every sheep with its partner" replaced propaganda about safe sex! Other topics discussed include; child survival, health professionals (focusing on the debate between community-based and hospital/doctor oriented health care), and the provision of medicines.

The final two chapters specifically consider health policy after the Sandinistas and "the Nicaraguan health model."

The authors do not say who they believe their audience to be but this book does provide an insight into the difficulties facing a revolutionary government coming to power after months of war and the consequent problems of implementing a "primary health care" strategy. It does, however, assume a level of knowledge of Nicaraguan politics that I, unfortunately, do not possess and for that reason I would have welcomed more discussion of the role of the Contras and the reasons why the Sandinistas lost the election in 1990. There is a paucity of maps and not all the abbreviation used throughout the text are listed in the front of the book. These points aside, I found this an interesting and readable book.

ALISON REYNOLDS

*Senior Registrar in Public Health Medicine,
Liverpool Health Authority*